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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Edwin Meese, III
The Attorney General
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

I know that you share my concern regarding the increasing threat to our national security posed by unauthorized disclosure of classified intelligence information. The compromise of our intelligence sources, both human and technical, has placed lives in jeopardy and rendered expensive technical collection systems ineffective. Unfortunately, we have not been able to take effective steps to punish those who have violated their obligation to protect classified information and this has created the perception that nobody cares. We simply must restore discipline to the handling of sensitive information.

While there is no single solution to the problem of leaks, one step that can be taken is to enact legislation that would criminalize the reprehensible conduct of disclosing classified information to those outside the government who are not authorized to receive it. Enactment of leaks legislation, combined with a vigorous effort to detect those who are engaged in disclosing classified information, will restore an element of risk to those who misuse classified information.

We have proposed leaks legislation as part of the draft Intelligence Authorization Bill for the past two years. Last year, the Department raised objections to including leaks legislation in the Authorization Bill because the issue needed to be studied more closely and a consensus reached within the Executive Branch on whether we should attempt to enact leaks legislation. To date, I am not aware that any action has been taken to reach such a consensus.

This year we again proposed leaks legislation as part of the Authorization Bill. Once again, the Department questioned the need for the legislation and raised objections to the substance of our proposed bill. Last week, in a letter to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Acting Director of Central Intelligence reluctantly agreed to the deletion of the leaks provision from the Authorization Bill.